

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #15

Remove the Leaven in our Life

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This is Brother Kenny welcoming you to another Lord of the Sabbath broadcast.

If the second coming of Jesus had occurred last year, our King would be doing two things this month that you probably have never done: 1) He would be keeping His weekly seventh-day Sabbath Holy unto God our Father, and 2) He would be keeping the LORD'S Feast of Unleavened Bread, called Passover this spring. He did that every week and every year of His ministry. I have no doubt that He would NOT go to a Church for an Easter Sunday mass or liturgical service.

In the last several programs, I showed straight from the Bible how Jesus clearly asked His own disciples to remember His DEATH as our Passover Lamb. Neither Jesus, nor any of His Apostles, EVER asked anyone to do something to remember His RESURRECTION. He asked each of us to remember His DEATH each year until He would return to this earth and eat the Passover anew when the Kingdom of God comes. See Luke 22: 14-18.

I described that to start the Passover Feast on the first night how we would eat the Lord's Supper and wash one another's feet just as He commanded His disciples to do. But, the feast observance is to continue for seven days! It would culminate on the seventh day with another holy convocation of all those keeping the appointed feast. The days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread run from Abib 15 through Abib 21 on God's sacred calendar.

Last week I pondered why would God ask His people to devote seven whole days to such a celebration? And, I suggested that what is behind the seven-day feast is what God did to miraculously deliver His people Israel, His first chosen nation, FROM bondage in Egypt and TO freedom in the Promised Land.

My first answer was to consider what miracle God did for His people during the crossing of the Red Sea. It is a story as incredible as the pass-over in Egypt by the death angel. In Jewish tradition, this happened on Abib 21. That would be a reason for the seventh day of the feast and it being a high, holy-day of rest and worship.

Unfortunately, when I look at the exodus accounts in scripture, I see the Red Sea miracle happening as early as Abib 18 or 19. So, what else happened in the next several days by God's right hand for the Israelites to remember forever? The answer may be found in the town of Marah. Have you ever heard of it? Here is the account in Ex. 15: 22-27:

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

Now, could these have been the days of Abib 19, 20 and 21? Let's assume that on Abib

21, they came to Marah where they finally found water. But, there was a problem! Let the Lord tell us about it in Ex. 15: 23-25:

Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses saying, "What shall we drink?" So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

So, we see yet another miracle done by God for His people to comfort and refresh them as they are being delivered from Egypt into the Promised Land. After three days walking in the desolate wilderness without water, one would get very thirsty. It could lead to death.

Now, this would be the third time that the LORD saved His people from death. First, they were saved from the death angel by the blood of the lamb. Second, they were saved from drowning in the Red Sea by God parting it so the Israelites could cross on dry land while the Egyptian army was drowned. And, now, they are saved once more from dehydration by changing the bitter water of Marah.

Is the ability to sweeten bitter water a miracle of God we should remember? Certainly! Does it remind you of the first public miracle of Jesus where he turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana? And, God and Moses thought it was worth remembering too. Look what the LORD declares in Ex. 15: 25-26:

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.

Now, you may say, what does that have to do with a Passover lamb or the death of Jesus? What has it to do with the resurrection of Jesus? The answer is nothing. What it has to do with is the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread where God intervenes in the affairs of His people provided they will listen to His voice and do as He commands. He wants them to trust in Him as a Deliverer who can and will save them from potential disasters and even from diseases. God's salvation, although offered freely by His grace, always has a string attached: those who accept the salvation of God must be willing to keep His commandments to retain the gracious blessing.

So, how does this third miracle of salvation relate to the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Well, I admit that the link takes some searching and reflecting. And, surprisingly, a place where I see a link is in the New Testament. Let's look at 1Cor. 11: 27-34:

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine

himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But, if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

Here we see a warning by Paul that, when the Corinthians come together to eat the Lord's supper, they must be worthy to eat it. They are to examine themselves regarding their behavior and their intent while partaking of the Lord's supper when keeping the Feast.

And, what were the problems among the Corinthians in how they were keeping the feast? One was thinking that eating the Lord's body, and drinking His blood, had something to do with eating and drinking to quench physical hunger or thirst or as a reason to indulge oneself with food as a glutton or with wine as a drunkard. Worse, the brethren doing these things did not share with those who actually were hungry or wait until all the brethren arrived to begin their own feast of food and drink. They were thinking of themselves! They were puffed up like leavened bread, and not discerning the needs of the less fortunate brethren who represent the body of Christ, the church of God.

These are all wonderful sources of study during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But, before that, Paul levels another similar criticism against those keeping the feast with a wrong attitude toward their brethren. He has heard about divisions and factions in the congregation. Someone apparently had complained to Paul and he believed it was true at least in part. It is here we get an inkling of a spirit of bitterness among the brethren. Now, do you see another possible link to the bitter water at Marah?

If a man looks to Jesus and His sacrifice of His body on a tree for His body the church, He can sweeten them and remove the bitterness. This is why each person who comes to the Feast to eat His body and drink His blood as our Passover Lamb must examine himself to see if He is worthy of the sacrifice of Christ. He laid down His life for His friends while some of the Corinthians selfishly ate and drank a banquet to themselves.

Notice the reference to some of the Corinthians, all supposedly in the Church of God and covered by the blood of the Lamb of God, who had celebrated the Feast of the Lord in such an unworthy manner before and had become weak and sick. Some even had died and were asleep in their graves awaiting the second coming of Jesus and the first resurrection of the dead in Christ. And, Paul strongly implies that keeping the Feast in an unworthy manner had led to this.

Is this saying that God punished them for their unworthy celebration? It could be. I am not certain. Many will say that surely our loving God would not send sickness, disease or death to His own people who disobey a few of His commands. However, I think we have plenty of examples of how Israel was punished with disease or death when they would

not obey God's command even AFTER God had saved them and delivered them FROM bondage and TO freedom.

I suspect it means at least that if they properly discerned the Lord's death and the brethren celebrating Him as their Passover supper, and kept the feast of the Lord in a worthy manner, they would receive the protection of the Lord from death or suffering.

Did not God protect His people from dying of thirst by sweetening the bitter water of Marah when they complained of thirst? Do you recall that in Ex. 15, God told His people that He would test them? Do you recall the scripture I cited earlier of how God said He would not put on them the diseases He put on the Egyptians before the exodus if they would heed His voice and keep His statutes? Were these unworthy Corinthians tested and then made to suffer for failing God's test of obedience?

Here is one last interesting point about this Marah miracle done by God. Have you ever wondered why Christ had to suffer so much before He died? A quick, painless shedding of His blood would have supposedly also redeemed us from the death penalty for our sin. I think Marah helps reveal the answer. It was by His stripes that we are healed! He is, according to Ex. 15: 26, the LORD who heals you.

In the remainder of this Program, I want to cover the incredible story of Jesus being our bread of life. We must eat unleavened bread, symbolic of His unleavened fleshly body, for seven days each year during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, accepting Him as our Passover Lamb and Savior.

But, we can't have Him as our Savior without allowing Him to become the Lord of our life as well. We must obey His commands to be one of His who will be worthy to eat the Passover with Him in the Kingdom of God.

It would be wonderful if grace was cheap and all WE had to do was believe Jesus died for our sin. Do we need to do nothing for Him, or for our neighbor? Could we be in God's Kingdom ignoring His commands and doing anything we feel like doing? This is a very deceptive heresy because it is so self-pleasing.

How some Corinthians kept the Lord's Supper feast was given as an example for us that neither Paul, nor us, should praise. It DOES matter whether we come together as disciples worthy before the Lord! God said so.

Oh, brethren, does it seem to you that the Church at Corinth was of a humble and serving mind to wash one another's feet, physically, mentally or spiritually? Or, were they full of pride and self-righteousness because Abraham or Christ did it all for them?

On this point concerning human pride, I find the greatest teaching relevant to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Many will teach that leaven represents sin. And, the major message of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to remove sin from our life. I am not persuaded this is the anointed message of the unleavened bread during the feast. Why? Because it is

clear in Scripture that even those who trust in the sacrifice of Jesus will continue to sin. And, I believe that it is the Day of Atonement that deals with this continued sin, NOT the feast of Unleavened Bread.

I perceive the sacrifice of Jesus as a beginning, not an end, for our salvation. Yes, His work was finished. But, our work of serving Him and our neighbor has just begun. His death certainly justifies us from our prior sins. It covers those sins where we did not really know what we were doing or what He required of His disciples.

The righteousness of Jesus is seen by God instead of our own unrighteousness. In other words, we are justified and made right before God. We are no longer slaves to the bondage of past sins. We are given a fresh, clean start. After the death of the Passover lambs, the Israelites were no longer slaves to their past masters. Now, God would be their Lord and Master. And, He gave them commandments in the form of a marriage covenant to live comfortably with Him in the future if they wanted to acknowledge Him as their husband and submit to Him and His ways. This is how marriage between a man and a woman is also described.

By accepting Jesus as our Master, by being baptized, by receiving the Holy Spirit of God, and keeping the commandments of God, we can now become a new creature in Christ. We can grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. We can come out of the world and not be part of its ways. This is a process of continuing our salvation which began in Christ. But, we must endure to the end to receive God's promise of glory and eternal life. We are admonished to work out our salvation with fear and trembling in Phil 2: 12.

We can't stop believing in Him as our Savior, and ignore His commandments as our Lord, and expect to be raised to eternal life when we remain an unrepentant sinner. When Jesus returns as our King, we can be glorified in a resurrection just like He was. At that time, in our glorified bodies, we can enter into His Kingdom and rule and reign with Him on earth for 1,000 years. This is the gospel that Jesus preached. It was about the coming Kingdom of God. It was NOT a gospel ABOUT Himself. It was gospel about the coming Kingdom and about a new way that all men, not just Israel, can enter an everlasting Promised Land. Check it out carefully if this is a new understanding for you. Or, contact me if you are confused about what I am saying.

Back to the leaven that needs to be removed from our lives if we are in Christ and saved by His blood. If we concentrate on what Jesus warned about concerning the "leaven" of the Pharisees, I think you will find He was not warning us about their being sinners by breaking the written laws of God. Look at what Jesus said in Luke 12: 1:

In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Here Jesus tells us that the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. If we are to remove leaven from our lives, is it sin or hypocrisy that we need to remove? And, what were the

Pharisees hypocritical about? They taught one thing and practiced another. They taught compliance with doctrine they did not keep themselves.

Do you see the connection now to how a little leaven leavens the whole lump? When the teachers of the law teach falsely, soon all their students adopt their false teachings. The body of Jewish believers tended to believe the teachings of their exalted rabbis instead of the teachings of God. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees also made them feel superior and puffed up in their law keeping. Soon they were even building their own fences around the law of God placing burdens on people that God never intended and no man could bear.

We had commented on this when the Pharisees tried to show that Jesus was breaking the law of God by healing people on the Sabbath. And, when Jesus reacted to the Pharisees, He called them hypocrites for doing the following:

- giving to the needy publicly to be honored by men
- praying publicly to be seen by men
- fasting with agony to be seen by men
- shutting the kingdom of heaven to other men
- gaining converts and making them into twice the sons of hell as themselves
- keeping the law in minute physical detail and neglecting justice, mercy and faithfulness
- looking clean outside but inside being full of greed and self-indulgence
- they honored God with their lips but not with their hearts.

I would characterize the Pharisees as being more concerned with looking good than being good. They wanted to claim a special relationship with God when there was none. They wanted to be perceived as righteous, but were self-seeking. They were greedy and self-indulgent while acting religious. This IS hypocrisy.

The Pharisees were leavened and puffed-up with their own importance and their self-defined righteousness as Jews according to the tradition of their fathers and elders. Jesus, and now we, know how they despised Jesus because He exposed their hypocrisy and the people were drawn away from them to Jesus. They resorted to undeniably evil means to try to do away with Jesus. They were children of the devil rather than the innocent and loving children of the God which they pretended to honor.

The Godly alternate is to be “unleavened“ in heart. The Godly are not be puffed up with pride in their position or authority as judged by men. Instead, you must serve to be great in God’s Kingdom. To be of a contrite heart and poor in your own spirit but rich in the Spirit of God and love for your neighbor and the least of those brothers and neighbors among you. This, I believe, is the key message and focus of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We are nothing without God. He is our all in all. We must recognize our sinful nature and seek mercy from a holy God.

So, each of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, I am trying to remember that humble feeling of washing the feet of others. I am examining myself and what I do

that makes me feel important and does not esteem others. Some secrets in my heart are a shame and an embarrassment. No other man knows them. Yet God knows them and some day they will be revealed to everyone. The Feast of Unleavened Bread circumcises your heart. It is an annual acceptance of your depravity before a merciful and holy God.

Each bite of matzo all week brings to mind my need of serving others expecting nothing in return and looking for no honor from men. It is God who I must please because of what He did for me. He allowed His only Son to die that I might live. He made Jesus suffer that I might be healed from the suffering of disease. He forsook His only Son so that His risen Son would never forsake us. Oh, this God we serve is an awesome God who somehow still loves a wretch like me. He is worthy of my best for Him!

Sure, I want to obey all God's commandments and statutes to honor my Father. But, I believe the vital change that the sacrifice of the Son of God for us as our Passover Lamb is to recognize our need for a Savior because we are, and will remain, sinners despite the sacrifice of His only Son. We must accept that any righteousness we think we have, or that men think we have, is like filthy rags before God. It is ONLY by accepting Jesus as our Savior and humbly following Him as our Lord that we can have the kind of righteousness that will exceed that of the Pharisees and allow us the reward of seeing and entering the Kingdom of God.

I pray that I have communicated just how meaningful celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread can be for Christians. This week of wonder and introspection about myself puts me in a humble and grateful attitude respecting my God. I am reminded of how this same God delivered His people from bondage and slavery to freedom in Him in a promised land flowing with milk and honey. I am reminded of how this same God delivered His Son from death and placed Him at His right hand in a heavenly paradise. I am reminded that this same God can deliver me to His Kingdom with the Lamb of God as my King of kings.

Do I benefit from celebrating the Lord's Feast of Unleavened Bread? Let me count the ways. Next week, I will describe how I see the resurrection of Jesus incorporated into the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Before I close today, I would like to point out two other things concerning the role of Jesus in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. One involves the Israelites who apparently run out of their unleavened bread and complain to Moses about starving in the wilderness as recorded in Ex. 16: 1-5. Please notice it is now the 15th day of the second month when ANOTHER miracle occurs just like on the 15th day of the first month. In fact, we see that if one is traveling or ceremonially unclean for the Passover of the first month, the people are still commanded to keep the Passover the second month as found in Numbers 9.

It is in this second month that God feeds His people with bread from heaven, known as manna. It is in this account that God makes His point about resting from gathering manna on the Sabbath. Now, look closely at what Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, does

say to recount this additional miracle of God for His people in John 6: 47-51:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

If these words of Jesus will not move you to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread to honor Him, there is little else I can say that would. But, also consider this second point. Where was Jesus born? In Bethlehem, which in Hebrew means “The House of Bread.”

Until next Sabbath, may the Lord of the Sabbath, who is our bread of life, bless you as you honor Him with your worship during the LORD’S Feast of Unleavened Bread